

June 15, 1955

Dear Howard:

Re: The Conspiracy to Sabotage the
Information Program in 1951

A few days ago I heard a rumor that a book was about to come off the press entitled "The Private Diary of a Public Servant" which was written by Martin Kerson, a former Naval officer and a Harvard Law School graduate who was with me as my top consultant when I was in Washington.

As you undoubtedly realized, I did not want the job Mr. Dulles asked me to take any more than a dog wants fleas but both Donald B. Lourie and Carl W. Hedges literally begged me to come down and stand between Mr. Dulles and Mr. McCarter and, at the same time, reorganize the information program. They explained that the information setup was in a very chaotic condition with very low morale and that some responsible person must be brought in to take over at the earliest possible moment.

It was an exceedingly inconvenient time for us to leave Temple University as we were in the midst of a ten-million-dollar drive for new in-patient and out-patient buildings at the hospital. However, because of my devotion to the President and my desire to be helpful to the Administration and also because of my admiration and respect for Mr. Dulles, I decided to accept the assignment, realizing that I probably could do the job in eight or nine months and then turn it over to some qualified person after I had brought the International Information Administration out of the State Department and set it up as an independent operation with strong men in the various key spots.

A few weeks after I arrived I was warned by two prominent Republicans whom I have known for many years that there was a conspiracy going on to discredit my activities and to sabotage my entire effort. I did not report this to anyone (except to Kerson and two or three very close friends) but decided to see wood, feeling confident that the results of my work would pay off and that in the long run I could do the kind of a job I felt President Eisenhower and Vice President Nixon had envisioned for our government's information program.

However, hardly a week went by but what a very definite effort was made to cause me embarrassment, and I understand that a good many misstatements of fact and half truths were told to both the President and Sherman Adams about my work, so naturally neither of those gentlemen had

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much confidence in my administration.

As a matter of fact, the job I had taken on was certainly not as difficult as reorganizing the Pennsylvania Relief Administration during the depression, when 20% of the population were on the rolls, or making a financial success out of Time, Inc., or rebuilding (both academically and financially) a university of twelve thousand students that was about to close its doors. I am happy to say that Temple University is now financially strong, that we have a good credit position with the banks, and that we have added nearly eighteen million dollars worth of new facilities (besides bringing to our academic staff several hundred very topnotch teachers and deans).

Selling the country on the recommendations of the first Hoover Commission was a three-year job that took 20% of my time, and even men like Alfred Sloan and several others cautioned me not to be too hopeful about the results, advising that if we could get 25% of the recommendations accepted, we would be doing very well; and the record shows that over 67% of the original recommendations were put into effect.

All of those jobs were much more intricate and difficult than the Information operation, and so I approached my work with confidence and complete faith in the outcome, provided I had the support that had been promised me by both McCarran and Lourie, and they had both assured me that the important men on the White House staff as well as the officials in the State Department would do everything they could to be helpful. And, I am happy to say, the senior officials at State, incidentally, could not have been more cooperative.

However, the frustrations were beyond anything I could imagine and I had a little high blood pressure attack (in June) which the doctors felt might become dangerous, so I had to resign the day the International Information Administration moved out of the State Department and became an independent operation (July 31, 1953).

A few days later, the editors of several publications (including The Saturday Evening Post) who knew something about my troubles, suggested that I write a piece to show up the men who had sabotaged my efforts and thus clear the atmosphere. However, because of my relationship with the President and because I have been an active, life-long member of the Republican Party, I thought an article by me might cause considerable embarrassment and that it was better to let the skeletons remain in the closet.

Now I find that my chief consultant, who kept a daily diary, has produced a report on our activities that really takes the cover right off the ball. I naturally wish it had not been written because it certainly will

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give a lot of ammunition to the Democrats. This, of course, troubles me a great deal.

I, personally, harbor no bitterness toward anyone. I feel a little like Charlie Wilson who told me the other night that he hated nobody but that he liked some people more than others.

For anyone concerned with winning the election in 1956, Herson's report is probably must reading. It is well written and about 90% accurate as far as I can determine. However, please remember that he is telling the story, that he is doing it without my permission, and that I did not know anything about it until approximately ten days ago and have only just read an advance copy that was mailed to me recently by the publisher. Herson's book will be issued by The Macmillan Company late this month.

Sorry this letter had to be so long.

Cordially yours,

Robert L. Johnson

Honorable Howard Pyle
Administrative Assistant to the President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

CC: Mr. George K. Allen
Mr. Walter E. Annenberg
Hon. James H. Duff
Hon. Herbert Hoover, Jr.
Hon. Edward Martin
Hon. Joseph W. Martin, Jr.
Mr. Robert E. McClure
Hon. Samuel K. McConnell, Jr.
Mr. Robert McLean
Hon. Richard M. Nixon
Mr. Ellis D. Slater

P. S.: A similar letter is going forward to both the President and the Secretary of State.

And a few others.